

The Display of Hidden Treasures: Zenkōji's *Kaichō* at Ekōin in Edo

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In the sixth month of 1692 the Shinano Zenkōji held the first public display of its concealed Buddha (*hibutsu* 秘仏) at Ekōin, a Jōdo temple in Edo. Old and young, townspeople and countryfolk alike, streamed to the site to see the famous image. The poet Ishikawa Masamochi (1753-1830) recorded the enormous crowds who visited the display in his *Miyako no teburi* 都の手ぶり (1808):

Until the Genroku period there were only about ten inns in the three neighborhoods [i.e. the area around Ekōin]. So in 1692 when the Shinano Zenkōji Buddha was displayed at the Ekōin in Honjo, everyone was excited and a great number of people came here on pilgrimage. Innumerable crowds gathered, including even old men and women from the farthest countryside. When they came, they had to spread their straw mats in the street and spend the night there.¹⁾

By the time that Ishikawa wrote his description in the early 1800s, periodic displays *kaichō* (開帳 opening of the curtain) of the Zenkōji icon had become well-known spectacles in Edo. In an increasingly urban and commercialized society, the treasures and sacred icons of famous temples found a ready audience in the townspeople of Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto. Especially temples and shrines in less urbanized regions like Zenkōji in northern Shinano Province seized this opportunity to promote their cults.

Even though the practice of holding a periodic public display of a sacred object had existed since the medieval period, it became a major fund-raising activity in the Edo period. Temples had the option of holding a *kaichō* at their own institution (居開帳 *igaichō*) or moving their collection to another religious institution – preferably one located in one of the major urban areas – and displaying it there (出開帳 *degaichō*). The Jōdo temple Ekōin, located in Honjo 本所, became a favorite host institution with the largest number of *degaichō* in Edo. Zenkōji 善光寺 (Shinano Province) – whose Amida triad ranked among the four most popular icons for *degaichō* (or as Edoites referred to them: the “Four Heavenly Kings (四天王 *Shitennō*)” together with Narita Fudō 成田不動 (Shimōsa), the Shakamuni of Seiryōji 清涼寺 (Yamashiro), and a statue of Nichiren from Mount Minobu 身延山 (Kai Province) – held four of its six *degaichō* in Edo at Ekōin.²⁾ Zenkōji's Edo *kaichō* alone inspired twenty-six works of fiction (two plays, six *kibyōshi* and eighteen *kobanashi*). Zenkōji therefore takes the lead as a source of inspiration even ahead of Sensōji 浅草寺 (twenty-four works) and Naritasan Fudō (nine works).³⁾

This article examines *degaichō* both at a macrolevel in the example of Ekōin and at a microlevel in the case of Zenkōji. Zenkōji's *degaichō* at Ekōin illustrate that a *degaichō*

was not just simply a display of a single sacred object but a complicated affair that involved numerous institutional bodies – religious, governmental and commercial – and consisted of a larger collection of items beyond the main icon. This collection was governed primarily by religious and economic principles rather than by aesthetic ones as one might expect with religious art. More specifically, as the case of Zenkōji shows, the collection was closely related to the temple's cult as propagated through *engi* 縁起 (founding legends) and recreated the sacred space of Zenkōji at the site of the display. Even the fund-raising activities were explained within the context of the Zenkōji icon's soteriological efficacy. In contrast to the common perception that the religious significance of *kaichō* declined over the course of the Edo period, they continued to attract visitors through their religious symbolism. Moreover, what led Zenkōji to abandon the practice of *degaichō* at the end of the Edo period was not that it was merely outdone by the competition from surrounding sideshows but that its own *degaichō* had become such large, unwieldy, and expensive affairs that they failed to yield the intended economic profit.

***Kaichō* in the Early Modern Period**

What then is a *kaichō*? As follows from the literal meaning of the characters 開帳 (opening of the curtain) and its alternative names *kaihi* 開扉 (opening of the door) and *keigan* 啓龕 (opening of the alcove), the practice derives its name from opening the front doors of the small shrine cabinet or alcove that holds the statue of a Buddhist or Shintō deity or other sacred treasures. One can loosely define *kaichō* as a temporary public display of a sacred object such as a concealed Buddha (*hibutsu* 秘仏 ; primarily Kannon, Amida and, in the case of the Nichiren sect, statues of Nichiren) that are otherwise hidden from public view. As mentioned above, we can distinguish between two types of *kaichō* – *igaichō* and *degaichō* depending on whether it is held at its home institution or at another religious institution. *Igaichō* seems to be the older of the two, but *degaichō* became particularly popular in urban centers during the Edo period.⁴⁾ At Zenkōji, we can distinguish not only between *igaichō* and *degaichō* but also between several types of *degaichō*. The Zenkōji *igaichō* was usually called *goekō* 御回向, after the main ceremony around which it was structured. Furthermore, Zenkōji held three types of *degaichō*: the first type was held only in Edo (江戸開帳 Edo *kaichō*), the second in the three major urban centers (三市開帳 *sanshi kaichō*) that is in Edo, Kyoto and Osaka, and the third circuted the whole country (回国開帳 *kaikoku kaichō*).

The term *kaichō* thus covers a range of events ranging from just a few days to lengthy exhibits lasting one or two months. Especially in the case of *igaichō*, it is difficult to distinguish between official *kaichō* and less official *kaichō-like* events (e.g. regular annual ceremonies that included a display of the main image, short-term displays during *ennichi* 縁日 – special days to establish a karmic bond with a deity – or *mushiboshi* 虫干 – the annual airing of treasures). However, some more elaborate *igaichō* and most *degaichō* were lengthier, lasting on average between fifty and sixty days.⁵⁾

The first recorded *kaichō* dates back to Tang China when relics of Shakamuni Buddha were displayed at the Feng-xiang Fa-men-si 鳳翔法門寺 in 818, an event that took place once every thirty years. In Japan, the earliest records of *kaichō* date from the Kamakura period. For example, a copy of the Zenkōji Amida triad was displayed in

Kyoto in 1235. The practice became more popular during the Muromachi period but reached its peak during the latter half of the Edo period.⁶⁾ *Kaichō* first appeared in Kyoto and spread from there to the rest of the country including Edo. Comparing *kaichō* held in Kyoto and Edo during the first half of the eighteenth century, Hiruma Hisashi has pointed out that *igaichō* were the predominant form in Kyoto with its long history of famous old temples, whereas *degaichō* were more common in Edo, which did not have as many famous temples due to its more recent history. Kitamura Gyōen's analysis of *kaichō* held in Owari shows that between 1777 and 1828, Nagoya, another important urban area, predominantly featured *igaichō* (85%) rather than *degaichō* (15%). The predominance of *degaichō* was thus a particular characteristic of Edo. Furthermore, according to Hiruma, the *degaichō* held in Kyoto were primarily those of temples immediately near Kyoto, especially within Yamashiro. In contrast, Edo hosted *degaichō* for temples from as far as Mutsu (Tohoku) and Chikugo (Kyushu) and many from the Kansai region. Kitamura's research on Owari Province indicates that this region attracted *degaichō* from central Japan, the Kansai region, the Kanto region, and even a few from northern Japan but none from western Honshu, Kyushu or Shikoku.⁷⁾ Again Edo stands out with the widest representation of distant provinces.

It is generally held that *kaichō* were originally carried out to allow the viewer to establish a karmic bond (結縁 *kechien*) with the image, but beginning in the fifteenth century, they gradually became important fund-raising events for temples and shrines to cover the costs of construction and repairs. This financial aspect was increasingly emphasized during the Edo period as temples and shrines came to depend less and less on the bakufu to finance repairs and instead raised funds from ordinary people.⁸⁾ Some religious institutions held *kaichō*, especially *igaichō*, at regular intervals. Zenkōji, for example, held an *igaichō* on average once every eight years. The event always generated a marked increase in pilgrims to Zenkōji.⁹⁾

Moreover, it has been argued that the religious significance of *kaichō* declined during the Edo period and the displays became increasingly flamboyant forms of entertainment popular for their sideshows (見世物 *misemono*), teahouses, booths and other amusements including kabuki and *jōruri*.¹⁰⁾ Sideshows (*misemono*), like *kaichō*, began to appear in Edo in the late seventeenth century and peaked during early nineteenth century. Attractions included unusual man-made objects (both with religious and secular overtones), dolls, Western artifacts, peep shows, plants, animals, and human beings with unusual abilities or deformities. The area near Ryōgoku Bridge was the most famous site of sideshows in Edo. Vendors and showmen set up shop in the area attracted by the crowds of pilgrims visiting *kaichō* at Ekōin.¹¹⁾ This aspect of the displays is very much emphasized in works of popular literature that describe Zenkōji's 1778 *degaichō*, such as Hiraga Gennai's *Bodaiju no ben* 菩提樹の弁, Ōta Nanpo's *Hannichi kanwa* 半日閑話, and Saitō Gesshin's *Bukō nenpyō* 武江年表. However, evidence from these literary pieces ought to be used with caution.

While it is true that toward the end of the period *kaichō* had evolved into fairs with elaborate sideshows that were sometimes larger than the *kaichō* itself, it is difficult to assess an actual decline in the religious significance of the displays. The notion of a decline appears to be partially an outgrowth of the modern theory of "the decline of Buddhism in the Edo period" (江戸仏教墮落論 *Edo bukkyō darakuron*). Early modern

visitors were certainly attracted to freak shows and oddities, but for an Edo-period audience, religious sincerity and curious attraction to sideshows even were not necessarily mutually exclusive. A case in point is Kōriki Tanenobu Enkōan's record of his visit to the Takadasan *kaichō* (*Takadasan kaichō annai ki* 高田山開帳案内記) at the Jōdoshin temple Keieiji 慶栄寺 in Nagoya in 1826. A samurai from Owari, Kōriki (1756-1831) was deeply interested in *kaichō* and other religious events and celebrations.¹²⁾ Though he did not record a visit to a Shinano Zenkōji *kaichō*, the *degaichō* of Takadasan is relevant to our subject. Takadasan Senjūji 高田山専修寺 in Shimotsuke Province, the head temple of the Takada branch of the Jōdo Shin sect, was one of the most famous "new Zenkōji" (temple whose main image of worship was a copy of the Shinano Zenkōji Amida triad) and held even more *degaichō* than Shinano Zenkōji during the Edo period. So famous was the temple that the *Amida nyorai ekotoba den* (1847), a seven-volume collection of vernacular miracle stories about the Shinano Zenkōji, devotes one entry to the temple.¹³⁾ Known for its connection with Shinran, the founder of the Jōdo Shin school, the beliefs associated with Takadasan was slightly different from the Shinano Zenkōji, but the two temples also shared many elements.

Many of the objects on display were variations on Shinano Zenkōji displays. According to Kōriki, the *kaichō* contained the Takadasan Zenkōji Amida triad, a wooden statue of Shōtoku Taishi, a painting of Amida by Takuma Hōgen, and sacred treasures such as an Eleven-faced Kannon by Kōbō Daishi and the Takadasan *engi*, which plays a particularly important role in his record. He carefully recounts the entire story as he must have heard it performed during an *etoki*. The *engi* is virtually identical to the three parts of the Shinano Zenkōji *engi* explaining the origins of the Zenkōji Amida triad and the founding of the Shinano Zenkōji but also includes an additional fourth section that deals with Takadasan's relationship with Shinran. Kōriki's account of the religious attractions of the *kaichō* is followed by a list of various *misemono*, including even a ferocious stuffed tiger.¹⁴⁾ Kōriki was evidently interested in both aspects of the *kaichō* and recorded both with precision, but in his account the sideshow does not overshadow the actual *kaichō*. The attention he pays to the Takadasan *engi* is significant. Like many *engi*, this text interweaves the story of the origin's of the icon, the founding of the temple, and the icon's soteriological potential into an effective narrative that is well suited to the purpose of a *kaichō*, which was meant to raise funds for temple construction and repair works through the promotion of the icon's soteriological efficacy.

Similarly, the example of Shinano Zenkōji illustrates that despite its economic incentives, a *kaichō* also remained a way for believers in distant places to establish a direct karmic connection with a famous sacred image: even residents of Edo who were unable to make a pilgrimage to Zenkōji in Shinano could visit the transplanted sacred precincts of Zenkōji, listen to an explication of Zenkōji's illustrated *engi*, purchase amulets and sacred prints of the images on display, and, most importantly, view the sacred image in person. However, as the Edo period progressed *degaichō* developed into events of ever grander proportions, perhaps as a result of increased competition among temples and between temples and sideshows. In the end, the *degaichō* of some temples like Zenkōji were not economically successful because of their grand scale rather than their loss of religious significance. Even though Zenkōji no longer holds

degaichō, its *igaichō* have continued to flourish in the modern period, attracting pilgrims who seek to establish a physical karmic bond with the sacred image by touching a tall pole in front of Zenkōji's main hall that is connected to the right hand of the sacred image by a rope.

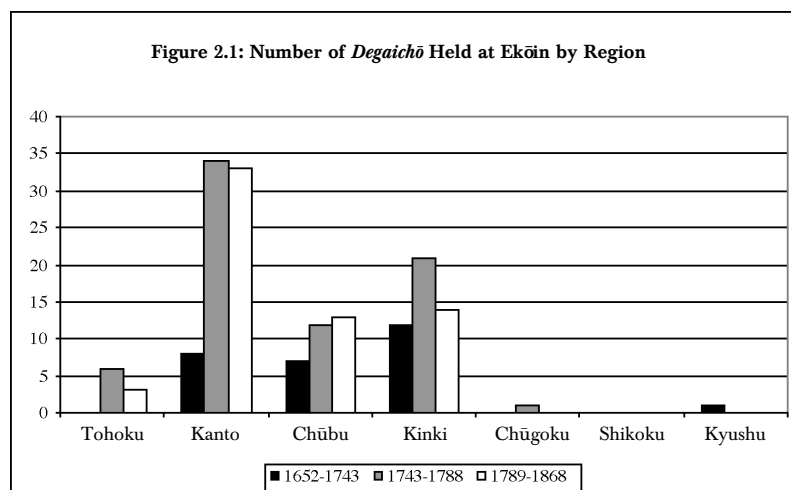
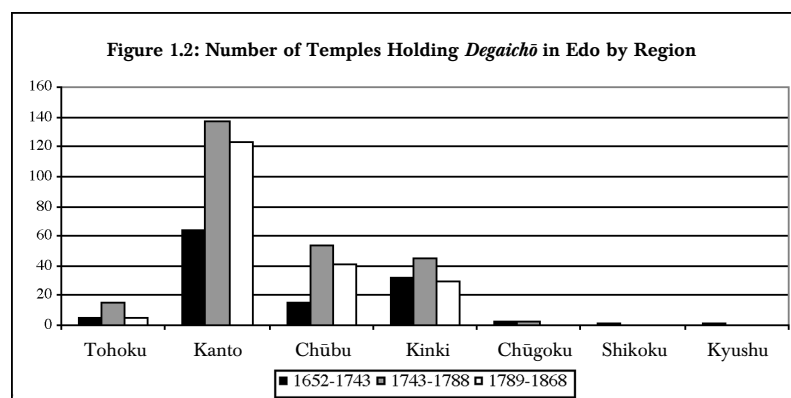
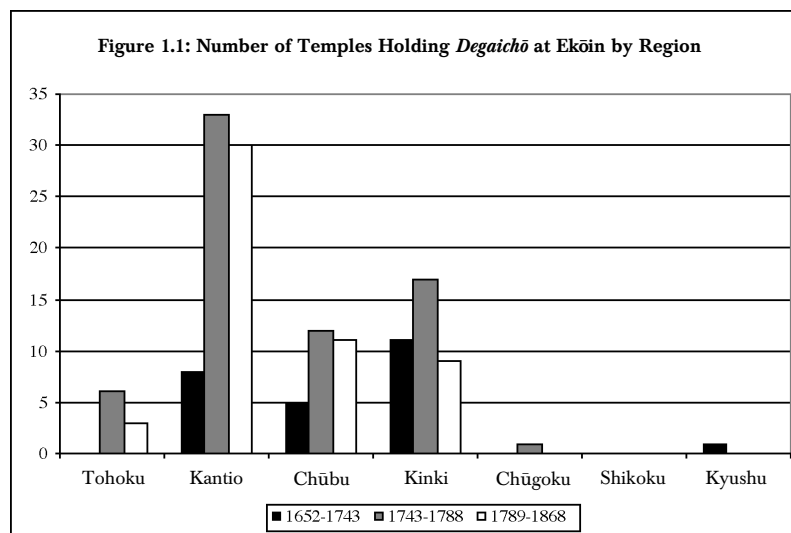
Ekōin

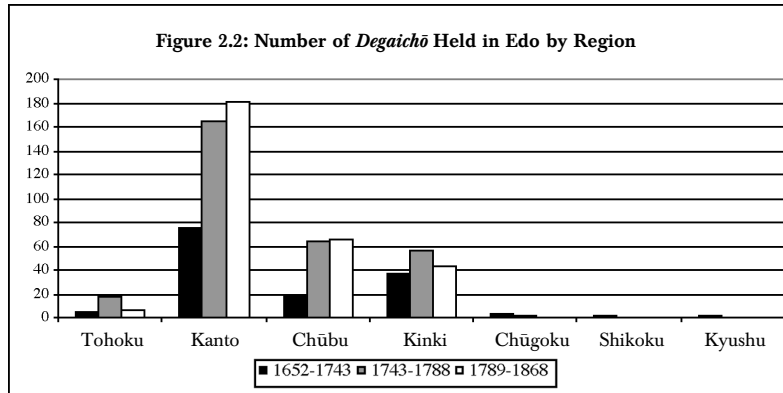
As a temple near a major thoroughfare in a busy urban environment, Ekōin was an ideal host for temples trying to raise funds through a *degaichō*. The temple was located near Ryōgoku Bridge along the banks of Sumida River, an area known to attract large crowds of people in the summer months to enjoy the breeze on the river bank or fireworks. The area was also became known for its thriving businesses including flourishing unofficial prostitution and outlandish sideshows.¹⁵⁾

The Jōdo temple Shoshūsan Ekōin 諸宗山回向院 (Mount Multiple-Sect Memorial Temple), also known as Kokuhōsan 国豊山 (Mount National Prosperity) or Muenji 無縁寺 (No-Karmic-Bond Temple), was founded upon the order of the bakufu in 1657 for the 108,000 victims of the Great Meireki Fire in 1657. Afterwards victims of fires and earthquakes who had become spirits without a karmic bond, that is spirits without relatives to take care of them as ancestors, were memorialized there. In the beginning Ekōin was famous for these tragic victims and for its continuous *nenbutsu* recitation services. It is these functions on which the *Edo meisho ki* (1662) by Asai Ryōi (d. 1691) focuses. However, over the course of the period Ekōin became famous for more light-hearted events such as fund-raising sumo matches.¹⁶⁾

Most importantly, Ekōin was famous for *kaichō*. During the Edo period, the temple held eight *igaichō* and became a popular host for *degaichō*. It is this aspect that is highlighted in the *Edo meisho zue* (1829-1836), which shows not only the temple grounds of Ekōin but also a bustling *kaichō* scene.¹⁷⁾ In fact, by the nineteenth century Ekōin had become the most popular host for *degaichō* in Edo. According to Hiruma Hisashi's surveys of Saitō Gesshin's *Bukō nenpyō* and *bakufu* records of applications for permission to hold *degaichō*, Ekōin hosted a total of 166 *degaichō* out of 741 held in Edo between 1654 and 1867, leaving Fukagawa Hachiman 深川八幡 in a distant second position with fifty-eight *degaichō* and Yushima Tenjin 湯島天神 in an even more distant third place with thirty-one *degaichō*.¹⁸⁾

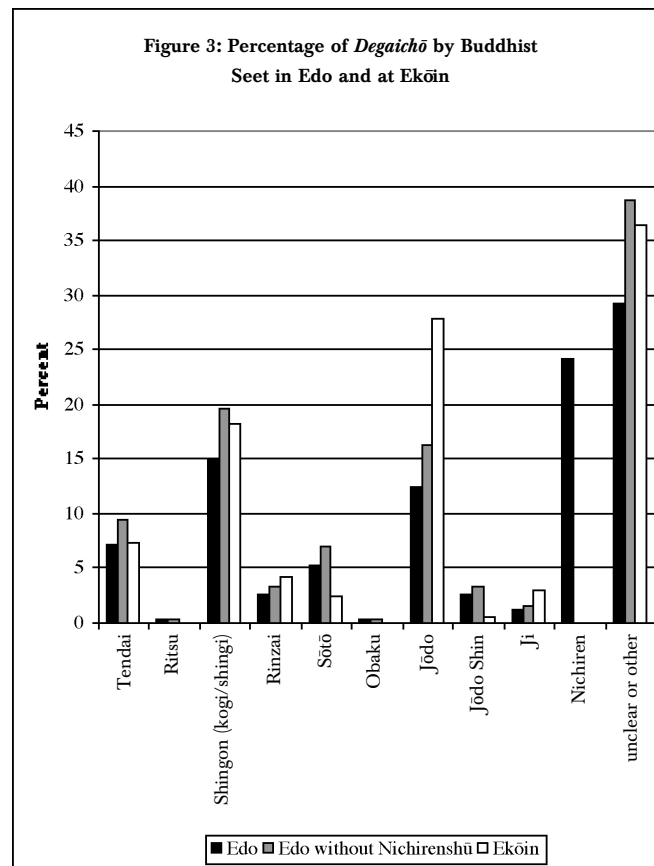
In many ways, the data from Ekōin are representative of *degaichō* held in Edo in regard to regional distribution and sects represented (see figures 1.1-2.2). When one compares the representation of temples that held *degaichō* and the actual number of *degaichō* at the Ekōin with comparable data from Edo, the patterns are quite consistent even though a larger number of provinces were represented in Edo as a whole.¹⁹⁾ The provinces immediately surrounding Edo as well as Yamashiro most commonly held *degaichō* both in Edo and at the Ekōin. The overall regional distribution figures for the Ekōin and Edo are consistent overall, concentrated in the Kanto, Chūbu, and Kansai regions.²⁰⁾ Both in Edo and at the Ekōin, temples from nearby regions held more *degaichō* than those of remote regions (Tohoku, Chūgoku, Shikoku and Kyushu). The Kansai region with its many famous temples and shrines and a highly developed communications system between Edo and Kyoto was also well represented. Yet whereas the Kantō region and central Japan experienced a remarkable boom in





degaichō from about 1740 to 1790 and maintained this level until 1868, the boom from 1740 to 1790 was not as pronounced in temples from the Kansai region, which even experienced a decline after 1790.²¹⁾

At first glance the representation of the Buddhist schools of the institutions holding *degaichō* in Edo and at Ekōin appears considerably different (see Fig. 3).²²⁾ The Nichiren school is the single most prominent Buddhist school holding *degaichō* in Edo,



but it is not represented at Ekōin. Temples of the Nichiren school, often noted for its tendency to keep apart from other sects, usually held *degaichō* within the confines of their own sect's temples. The event served to strengthen head-branch temple and lineage relations and to promote the teachings of the sect. A Nichiren *degaichō* usually included sermons at which the abbots of temples in the same lineage would all be present.²³⁾ Therefore, there were no *degaichō* by Nichiren temples at the Jōdo temple Ekōin. When one excludes the Nichiren sect, the figures for Edo and for the Ekōin do in fact resemble each other more closely, featuring a strong representation of the Amidist schools (especially its own Jōdo school), followed by the Shingon schools, the Tendai school, and finally the Zen schools.

The Protocol of a *Kaichō*

A *kaichō* was complex because it was not just a private affair at the discretion of the religious institution and its potential host but was also regulated by the bakufu, the head of the fief, and the temple's head temple. For a formal *degaichō* – in modified form also for an *igaichō* – the temple had to go through a number of steps. First, the home institution had to reach a consensus about holding a *kaichō*. At Zenkōji this could be a complicated affair because the temple was administrated by two institutions, the Tendai monastery Daikanjin 大勧進, and the Jōdo nunnery Daihongan 大本願. Furthermore, forty-six smaller temples also belonged to the larger complex. By the early-mid eighteenth century Daikanjin was in control of most of the temple's financial and ritual affairs, but that did not mean there were no disagreements among the various institutions. When Daikanjin proceeded with organizing a *degaichō* from 1701-1707 and 1740-1748 without consulting the other temples involved, this led to conflict and Daihongan filed official complaints with the bakufu.²⁴⁾

After the institution had reached a consensus, the various officials within the surrounding villages were consulted and had to give their approval.²⁵⁾ The villagers' businesses were affected when the major attraction left temporarily, leading to a decline in pilgrims. Again, if we take the example of Zenkōji, the temple town occasionally objected to holding a *degaichō* precisely because it meant a substantial loss of business. Both the smaller subtemples and the town objected to the *degaichō* held in 1820. By the 1830s the objections of the town and the subtemples had become so loud that Daikanjin cancelled its plans to hold a *degaichō* in 1835.²⁶⁾

When all parties reached an agreement, the institution could choose a location for the event.²⁷⁾ Whether Zenkōji wanted to hold a *degaichō* in Edo (1803, 1820) or all three major urban centers – Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka – (1692-1694), or even a tour of the whole country (1701-1707, 1740-1748, 1778-1782, 1794-1798), it needed specific hosts. In Edo, Ekōin was an attractive host and Zenkōji held four out of six Edo *kaichō* there, but on two occasions it chose other hosts: the Yanaka Kannōji 谷中感應寺 (the Daikanjin abbot's temple in Edo at the time) in 1701 and the Asakusa Denpōin 浅草伝法院 in 1803.²⁸⁾

Once all was settled, an official request went out to the estate administrator's office or the domain office. Then another request was sent to the institution's head temple. Of course the *furegashira* in Edo and the host temple also had to assent to hold the event.²⁹⁾ Zenkōji communicated with the Edo authorities and the Tendai temple

Kan'eiji 寛永寺 (its head temple since 1643 and the Tendai *füregashira*) in Edo through a representative of Daikanjin and Daihongan's branch temple, the Aoyama Zenkōji. In addition, the Sanada, lords of the neighboring Matsushiro domain adjacent to the Zenkōji estate and patrons of Zenkōji, were involved in Zenkōji's *kaichō* despite Zenkōji's administrative independence from the Matsushiro domain. In the case of the 1701-1707 *degaichō*, Matsushiro became involved upon the order of the bakufu during extraordinary circumstances when Zenkōji had been destroyed by a fire after it had just been rebuilt in the previous decade. This *kaichō* included a special private display at the Edo residence of the Sanada, the house of the Lord of Matsushiro. Later Edo *kaichō* in 1778, 1802, and 1820 included similar private displays for the Sanada.³⁰⁾

Most importantly, however, all temples had to request permission from the magistrate of temples and shrines (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行), the bakufu commissioner dealing with routine affairs of temples and shrines. As a general rule the bakufu approved a total of five *kaichō* of different institutions per season but occasionally gave permission to a few more events than this arbitrary limit.³¹⁾ Once the magistrate of temples and shrines gave its permission, the institution had to pay thank-you visits and send reports to all the parties involved – the magistrate of temples and shrines, the town commissioner, the office of in charge of patrolling the city to prevent fire and crimes, the Edo residence of the fief or domain head, the head temple, the *füregashira*, and of course the host institution.³²⁾ As we have seen this would involve the Matsushiro domain's Lord Sanada, Kan'eiji, the Aoyama Zenkōji, various temple representatives, and the respective host temples – Ekōin, Kannōji, or Denpōin.³³⁾

Now the long and involved process of practical preparations for the *kaichō* could begin. With each step the temple had to wait for official approval before proceeding to the next. The event needed advertising so the institution would request permission to post sign boards (*fuda* 札) from the magistrate of temples and shrines, the contact person, and the head of the fief or domain. The signboards were an important means to publicize the upcoming event. They came in two or three sizes (large, medium and small, or large and small). The largest signs attached to a pole would stand up to 5.5 meters tall with the boards measuring about 2.2 square meters. The small signs would be about 3 meters tall, the board measuring anywhere from 0.5-1 square meters. Sign boards were placed in strategic spots. A large sign would usually be placed in front of the host temple's gate. Small and medium sized signs would be put up by village entrances, bridges and rivers.³⁴⁾

Naturally, Zenkōji would have arranged for such advertisement. For the Edo *kaichō* in 1803, for example, signs were put up in front of the host temple's gate, near Ryōgoku Bridge, Nihonbashi, and other highly visible spots.³⁵⁾ *Igaichō* were of course advertised in a similar fashion. Zenkōji placed large signs outside the main hall and its inner gate, announcing the dates of the central focus of the event: the display of a treasured replica of the main image of worship (*maedachi honzon* 前立本尊), and the administration of the seal, and four daily services.³⁶⁾

In addition, the layout of the stalls for the actual display also needed the approval of the magistrate of temples and shrines. This required another formal request. The magistrate of temples and shrines also received a catalog of the sacred treasures to be displayed. Finally, the institution had to notify the magistrate of temples and shrines

and the town commissioner of its route of travel.³⁷⁾ The procession was another important means of promotion. An impressive parade complete with banners, several palanquins, and numerous monks and porters effectively announced the *kaichō*. The temple was also able to solicit funds along the way. Therefore, a more popular route was often chosen over less traveled, more direct routes. Often influential merchants sponsored these parades, hoping to promote their own business.³⁸⁾

Zenkōji's parades were certainly an impressive sight. At the end of the period the processions counted over one hundred participants including not only monks but also representatives from the villages surrounding Zenkōji. The parade would begin at Zenkōji. A crowd of villagers, representatives from the various temples at Zenkōji, and low-ranking samurai from the neighboring Matsushiro domain would see the procession off to the first rest stop at Tanbashima, where the party changed into travelling gear after lunch and set off on their ten-day trip to Edo. Packhorses and additional footmen were provided as a donation by the rest stations that catered to the procession on its way to Edo. The party and its precious cargo occasionally found accommodations at local domain headquarters. Once they arrived in Edo and changed back from travel gear at Sakabashi, they were greeted by a large crowd of clerics from Kan'eiji and Daihongan's Edo branch temple, Aoyama Zenkōji, who would join the procession. First the images were installed at the location of the display. In the case of Ekōin, this would mean: the Zenkōji triad in the center of the main hall, the three founders to its left and right and the Shakamuni image to the south, a layout that approximately mimicked the spatial relationship of the images at the Shinano Zenkōji. Then a small ceremony was held. Finally, the members of the procession and representatives from Kan'eiji and from the Matsushiro domain closed the day with a feast at a local teahouse.³⁹⁾ The grandeur of the procession, however, had its price because the large expense for travel weighed negatively on the income gained by the *degaichō*.

Zenkōji's *Kaichō* Collection: Its Contents and Display

Yet what were the actual items included in the collection that made its way from distant Shinano to the three cities including Edo and other places throughout the country? Documents of the 1692, 1701, 1740, 1778, and 1802 *degaichō* suggest that a typical display contained not only Zenkōji's main image, the Zenkōji Amida triad, but also other sacred Buddhist images (*reibutsu* 霊仏) and treasures (*reihō* 霊宝 or *hōmotsu* 霊宝).⁴⁰⁾ It involved a whole collection despite the difficulties involved in their transportation. Yet what precisely were the "sacred Buddhas" and "sacred treasures" of Zenkōji? Why were they included in the display? Was there a difference between the two in the way that they were handled and displayed?

A record of the *kaikoku kaichō* from 1701-1707, which included a *kaichō* at Kannōji in Edo, gives us a partial answer to these questions.⁴¹⁾ The record contains a description of the procession and the treasures to be displayed. The procession consisted of a banner bearer, who was followed by two porters with a donations chest, a palanquin with the Zenkōji seal born by four bearers, a palanquin with the main image born by six bearers, and an embroidered triptych of the temple's founder Yoshimitsu 善光 along with his wife Yayoi and his son Yoshisuke. The procession also included porters

carrying provisions and sandals and horses carrying raincoats for the party. This is followed by a list of sacred treasures including the *Zenkōji engi*, a triptych attributed to Eshin Sōzu's brush, a reliquary container, Shōtoku Taishi, an embroidered triptych attributed to Chūjō Hime, a painting of a Thousand Armed Kannon attributed to Kōbō Daishi, and "various donated Buddhas." The document appears to draw a clear line between the items listed in the description of the procession and items listed under "sacred treasures." Unfortunately, the list is not complete: it does not provide information about how these treasures were transported. However, the register is followed by another list containing all the personnel in the order of their status. There were about thirty people and six horses in the procession including monks, samurai, and commoners serving as porters.

The placement accorded to these objects in the procession reveals their significance. The donation box of course was of economic importance. The *kaichō* was meant to generate income for the reconstruction of the temple. Therefore, it was in a prominent position in the procession. Following the donation box was the Zenkōji seal. While a seal may have mostly administrative associations for a modern reader, the Zenkōji seal had in fact a deeply religious meaning. The seal was purportedly made from the same sacred gold as the Zenkōji icon, namely gold retrieved from the dragon king's realm. Its imprint ensured the believer passage to the Pure Land and was one of the items that generated a major portion of the profit during Zenkōji's *igaichō*. It played such an important role in Zenkōji's ritual life that it was temporarily returned to the temple during extended *degaichō* for New Year's ceremonies only to be rushed back to the exhibition as soon as the ceremony was over.⁴²⁾ The high economic and religious value of the seal explains is evident in the fact that it was transported in a palanquin and that it was in such a privileged position in the procession.

The next item was Zenkōji's main image, the Buddha Amida flanked by the bodhisattvas Kannon and Seishi. A Zenkōji *kaichō* actually did not display the original Zenkōji triad but a replica of the image, the so-called *maedachi honzon* (the main image that stands in front), which, like the true *honzon*, was also a concealed Buddha. It functioned as a stand-in for the original image and was venerated as the Zenkōji icon. As follows from the petitions that we considered above, it was the central object of the display, even though it in itself did not generate most of the income for the temple. Like the Zenkōji seal, it was transported in a palanquin that could simultaneously be used for display, because they were outfitted with brocade curtains and votive lights.

The Zenkōji icon was followed by an "embroidered triptych of Yoshimitsu." This appears to be a triptych depicting Honda Yoshimitsu, the legendary founder of Zenkōji, flanked by his wife Yayoi and their son Yoshisuke. The three were not depicted in painting but through colorful embroidery. The triptych was donated by Shōgun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi's mother Keishōin during the previous *kaichō* at Ekōin in 1692 and is found at present in Daikanjin's treasury.⁴³⁾ According to the *Bukō nenpyō*, these images were added to the *kaichō* as soon as they were made in 1692.⁴⁴⁾ Even though it was such a recent production, it was probably included because it was donated by the mother of the current shōgun and because it depicted three individuals deeply linked to Zenkōji's legendary history described in the *engi*.

In the section of the *engi* set in Japan, Honda Yoshimitsu finds the Amida triad in a

pond at Naniwa and takes it home. His wife Yayoi is skeptical of the power of the image. Therefore, the image grants Yayoi a vision of Yoshimitsu's former lives, which convinces her of the efficacy of the image. Following an oracle given by the image, Yoshimitsu moves from Naniwa to Shinano Province. There he lives with his wife and his son, worshipping the Amida image. One day his son Yoshimitsu dies without warning. His parents are distraught since he is their only son and heir. They pray to the Amida image for help. The story then shifts to the realm of the dead. The Amida image follows Yoshisuke into hell, manages to secure his return and through Yoshisuke's intervention, also rescues Empress Kōgyoku, who has recently passed away. Both Yoshisuke and Empress Kōgyoku return to life. Both at court and in the Yoshimitsu's house there is great joy. In order to reward Yoshisuke, Empress Kōgyoku summons Yoshimitsu and his son to court. She expresses her wish to have a temple hall built for the Amida triad and appoints Yoshimitsu as the governor of Shinano Province and Yoshisuke as the governor of Kai Province. Yoshimitsu and Yoshisuke return to Shinano and Kai in a grand procession. Zenkōji is built under Kōgyoku's patronage.⁴⁵⁾

This triptych of the three founders concluded the section of the procession with the focal objects of the *kaichō*. They were followed by boxes containing personnel, ritual instruments for use during the display, and porters carrying gear and provisions. However, a separate listing of names the temple treasures that accompanied the *degaichō* in 1701-1707. The list begins with an illustration of the *Zenkōji engi*. The previous *kaichō* in 1692 had included sermons on the *engi*. For this reason, it played an important role during the display. A *kaichō* was meant to promote the cult of a specific site. The *engi* could function as an important tool toward this aim since it contained famous ugens associated with the cult. The monks could use the illustrated version, which in the case of Zenkōji usually took the form of hanging scrolls.⁴⁶⁾ From the late medieval to the beginning of the early modern period so-called Zenkōji *hijiri* (Zenkōji holy men) used illustrated *Zenkōji engi* for the propagation of the Zenkōji cult in a type of performance called *etoki*.⁴⁷⁾

The next few items are more difficult to identify but some seem to have been included because they were attributed to famous religious persons. They include a painted triad by the monk Eshin. Eshin Sōzu (942-1017), also known as Urabe Genshin, was famous as the author of the *Ōjōyōshū* (985), which propagated belief in Amida. The following item is a unspecified reliquary in the shape of a stupa. An equally obscure item is a copy of the *Hannya shingyō*, possibly famous because of its antiquity or copyist; however, no explanation is given as to who copied it or why it was included. The list also includes an image of Shōtoku Taishi, who was venerated widely in Japan as a sage and early champion of Buddhism in Japan. In the context of Zenkōji, Shōtoku Taishi was more than a famous historical figure. He also appears in the *Zenkōji engi*, battling the evil forces opposing the introduction of Buddhism and the installation of the Amida triad at the early Japanese court. Another item is an embroidered image of a triad attributed to Chūjō Hime (753-781), a well-known figure from the *Taima mandara engi*, which described her as the creator of the Taima mandara, an embroidered tapestry, and an incarnation of Kannon.⁴⁸⁾ The last image identified individually is a statue of a Thousand Armed Kannon attributed to Kōbō

Daishi (774-835), the famous founder of the Shingon sect in Japan. Like Shōtoku Taishi, he was widely venerated in a transectarian cult throughout Japan. He has been accredited with founding an enormous number of institutions and producing an equally large number of artistic works.

Finally, the list ends by stating that the collection also included various donated Buddhas (奇進仏等). It appears, therefore, that they were included because of the fame of their donors. What unites all these works then is that they are included because either their religious significance, both general (relics, scriptures) more specific to Zenkōji (*engi*, images and figures related to the *engi* and the Zenkōji cult), or their relationship to a famous individual such as the donor or the artist. Some works of course fall into both categories. With the possible exception of the triptych of the three founders, the collection included items of purported antiquity (Nara or Heian periods).

Even though the treasures were held in high regard, they seem to have been handled differently from the central items of the display – the seal, the Amida triad and the three founders. There is no record that indicates special ritual protocol for the “sacred treasures,” but the seal, the Amida triad and the statues of the three founders were displayed framed by curtains (in the case of the Amida triad even folding screens) and illuminated by candle light or oil lamps. This means that during the display they were handled as sacred icons placed on altars for worship.

Visitors came not only to view ancient treasures but also to buy amulets. The document describes the responsibilities of those administering the seal and mentions that the monks and servants making and selling prints of Amida were so busy that they did not have a free minute, day or night. These prints were in fact a major source of income during a *kaichō*. Taking the example of an *igaichō* held in 1865 as a norm, income was generated by votive offerings (0.4%), miscellaneous small donations (37.2%), a fee for the subterranean circumambulation of the altar (8%) – an element absent during a *degaichō* –, and the sale of imprints of the seal (40.2%), small prints of the icon and amulets (11.8%), and incense (2.4%). The category of small prints and amulets included prints of the icon in small and medium size formats. In 1799 the former sold at about 1 *mon* each and accounted for 92.1 % of the sales. This was about 20 times as popular as the latter at 4 *mon* (4.8 %). The sale of the small prints was also more than twice as popular as imprints of the seal at 1 *mon* a piece. Amulets for women to protect them from being banished to the Blood Pool Hell also sold at 4 *mon* (3.1%).⁴⁹⁾

A document, which records the planned schedule of the Edo *degaichō* in 1778 shows not only how expansive the displays had become but that the images were handled as sacred statuary throughout the journey. The palanquin carrying the triad was accompanied by palanquins bearing the statues of the three founders and the sacred seal. In addition, the procession contained a palanquin with a statue of Shakamuni, which changed palanquins frequently at rest stops. Finally, a ritual bell and the lapis lazuli altar (the sacred altar that enshrines the Zenkōji triad) also made the journey. All items were displayed at Ekōin. Importantly, on the road as well as at Ekōin, the images were not only displayed but also frequently worshipped through services, prayers, and lamp or incense offerings. During the actual display, in the evening and

at night, the curtains were ceremoniously opened in the morning and closed at night. The image of Shakamuni was moved back into the temporary chapel each night after the closing ceremony. During breaks, copies of the *engi* and prints of the sacred image were sold.⁵⁰⁾

Similarly during the *degaichō* of 1803, the day would start with the ceremonial opening of the door from the sixth hour to sixth hour and a half, followed by a sermon and a ceremony in which the head administrator of Daikanjin would light incense, bow three times and chant an incantation before the *maedachi honzon* and the image of Shakamuni. Throughout the day lectures, prayers, and ceremonies such as offerings for the benefit of hungry ghosts were carried out continuously until the “sunset *kaichō*” at the seventh hour.⁵¹⁾

In his article “Zenkōji no Edo *kaichō*”, Takatsukasa Seigyoku refers to another document recording the procession from 1803. The document indicates that this procession was also substantially larger than the one in 1701. It included about 125 monks and porters in about equal numbers and the following sacred images and implements: the main image, the seal, a lamp, a censer, a large bell, an offering box, an image of the three founders, an image of Shakamuni, and another offering box, and additional unspecified luggage.⁵²⁾

The list of items on display also had also grown more elaborate by the late Edo period. The most important addition to the *kaichō* was the inclusion of Shakamuni since at least 1778. Documents recording the *kaichō* in 1820 provide us with the most precise picture of the inventory of the entire display. Like the one in 1803, this procession was much larger than the one in 1701. In addition to the clergy, it included fifty attendants from eight neighborhoods and three villages surrounding Zenkōji, who were in charge of carrying the items in the procession. The documents contain a detailed description of the items taken along on the *degaichō*. The list begins with the *maedachi honzon* in a phoenix carriage carried by eight townsmen from Zenkōji, followed by the seal in a palanquin carried by three villagers and a townsman. The statues of the three founders were transported in a palanquin carried by six men. Next we find a number of ritual implements and treasures: a censer (two bearers)⁵³⁾, a votive light (two bearers, four offering boxes (eight bearers), a large bowl-shaped bell (two bearers), and four loads of treasures. The grand procession concluded with ten porters of various kinds.⁵⁴⁾

Many key items included in 1701 were also present in 1820, but there were also several important differences. The central images are very similar to previous *kaichō*. Naturally, the *kaichō* included the *maedachi honzon* and the Zenkōji seal. Like the 1701-1707 *kaichō*, it contained images of the three founders, Yoshimitsu, Yoshisuke, and Yayoi. However, in contrast, these images were wooden statues rather than embroidered tapestries. One explanation might be that the reason why the 1701-1707 included the tapestries was that they had recently been donated by the reigning shōgun’s mother, who was still alive and was such a faithful believer that she requested that the entire collection be displayed at Edo castle upon the completion of the *kaichō* in Edo. In 1820, these reasons had disappeared, which might have prompted the temple to choose statuary instead. As the record states, the statues’ sculptor was unknown. Even in the early twentieth century, they were believed to date back to

antiquity. The statues of the three founders were actually an integral part of the Zenkōji. The nativist scholar Shimizu Hamaomi recorded his visit to Zenkōji in his *Jōshin nikki* from 1819. His first impression of the main hall is that “in the front there are three large statues of Yoshimitsu, Yoshisuke, and Yayoi no Mae.”⁵⁵⁾ The three founders’ importance as recipients of worship is clearly demonstrated by one of fifteen traditional pilgrimage songs to be sung by pilgrims as they made their way through Zenkōji:

Yoshimitsu and Yayoi no Mae, parent and child are not ordinary people but must be Buddhas.⁵⁶⁾

Therefore, they were more attractive objects for display than the more recent tapestry even though they were more troublesome to transport.

As mentioned above, the procession also included a statue of Shakamuni, transported in a phoenix carriage, giving almost equal status to the main image that also travelled in a phoenix carriage. A statue of Shakamuni was also included in the *kaichō* in 1778 and 1803. In documents of the 1820 *degaichō*, it is identified as the five-*shaku* five-sun statue that was washed ashore in Echigo’s Kotanohama (the location of a Shin Zenkōji under Daihongan’s supervision) and depicts a reclining Shakamuni passing into *nirvana*.⁵⁷⁾ According to tradition, the statue was said to originate in India, just like the Zenkōji Amida triad.⁵⁸⁾ It is currently in the possession of the Tendai Zenkōji subtemple Seison’in 世尊院 and dates to the latter half of the thirteenth century.

The *Zenkōji engi* is also included in the collection. In fact, the list contained an illustrated version of the *engi* and a written version of the *engi*. In contrast to the 1701-1707 *kaichō*, we can clearly identify the illustrated version of the *engi*. The register gives the name of the painter, which happens to be identical with the name of the painter of the *engi* currently in possession of the Daikanjin treasury: Baiōken Eishun 梅翁幹永春, a painter in the Kaigetsudō school, who was active in the early eighteenth century and known primarily for his depictions of beautiful women of the pleasure quarters.⁵⁹⁾ This illustrated *engi*, as we have seen above, is a triptych. The first panel depicts the part of the *Zenkōji engi* that takes place in India: the creation of the original Zenkōji Amida triad. The second panel shifts first to Paekche and then to Japan, showing the King of Paekche worshipping the image, its departure to Japan, and its dramatic introduction to the Japanese court. The third panel is set in Japan, depicting Shōtoku Taishi battling the opponents of Buddhism and the events leading up to the Amida triad’s installation at Zenkōji under Honda Yoshimitsu. As an easily accessible medium, the illustrated *engi* was an invaluable tool in the propagation of the Zenkōji cult.

The written *engi* probably refers to copies of the vernacular version of the *engi* to be sold during the *kaichō* since the box containing it is followed by another box containing prints of the Zenkōji icon intended for sale. The earliest written version of the *Zenkōji engi* dates to the late Kamakura period (1185-1333). This version as well as versions from 1370 and 1427 were written in *kanbun*, a Japanese version of classical Chinese, and were therefore illegible to the general populace but used by monks and

wandering performers to propagate the Zenkōji cult. In the seventeenth century improvements in printing techniques allowed for a broader distribution of miracle tales associated with Zenkōji though the first versions were still in *kanbun* and belonged to the genre of *otogizōshi*, a genre of popular tales going back to the medieval period. The first printed editions in *kanbun* were published between 1624 and 1644 (*Zenkōji nyorai honji*), in 1659 (*Zenkōji engi*) and in 1668 (*Kanbun hachinenban Zenkōji engi*).⁶⁰ By the second half of the eighteenth century, *kanbun* versions were not the only texts of the *engi* available. The first vernacular version, the illustrated *Zenkōji nyorai engi* (1692), proved to be extremely popular and was printed in many editions. Since it was written in vernacular Japanese, it was accessible to a large readership including women who were traditionally not supposed to be able to read classical Chinese. Further versions of the *engi* appeared in 1718 and 1740. It was after the Edo *kaichō* of 1740 and 1778 that the publication of vernacular versions of the *engi* as well as other vernacular media, *kibyōshi* and *kobanashi*, soared. In 1795 an abbreviated version of the *engi* was published in Zenkōji's temple town, Daimonmachi 大門町. By 1847 this abbreviated version appeared in the third edition.⁶¹ At least since the late eighteenth century, Zenkōji marketed these vernacular versions by including them among the sacred items for sale, such as prints and amulets, during the Edo *kaichō* from 1778 and 1803.⁶² The *degaichō* from 1820, therefore, is likely to have included similar copies of the text.

Other important treasures included in the list are a *Yūzū nenbutsu engi*, about 200 prints of the main image, a lapis lazuli altar and various other kinds of ritual implements used for the ritual display of the statuary, including candles, lamps, lamp oil, curtains, incense, censers, offering stands, pedestals, small alcoves, golden lotus flowers, etc. These ritual implements were not to be displayed on their own but in the display of the central Buddhist images.

And yet how was the display organized spatially? As mentioned before, temples had to request permission for the layout of their stalls from the magistrate of temples and shrines. For this purpose they would send a letter that had a map of the layout attached to it to the bakufu. Zenkōji also sent out such letters.⁶³ A map attached to a letter from 1777 indicates the spatial dispersion of the buildings and stalls as well as their dimensions. They are also labeled according to their function. The dimensions and functions are reiterated in the letter to which it was attached.

According to the map, most visitors would probably have entered through the main gate in the west and found tea shops to their left and right. No matter through which gate they entered they would have found a guard booth nearby before they reached the actual area containing the display. They would probably have found the area in the northeast corner of the compound off-limits. It seems to have been intended for the use of the monk and attendants of the *kaichō*, complete with kitchen and dining hall.

The booths containing the actual items on display are found on the southern side of the compound and in the main hall. The visitor would have to pass another guard booth, before finding a booth displaying Shōtoku Taishi and collecting donations toward repairs. Past this stall, the visitor would find the booth issuing various prints of the image and amulets, offering memorial rituals, and collecting food-offering donations for the Buddha. The booth next door, labeled “place of the illustrated *engi*”,

would contain votive lights, flints, the copies of a popular version of the *Zenkōji engi*, the illustrated *engi*, and labels with the date. In front of this stall, a separate booth contained the image of Shakamuni. This layout is also found in modified form in a map of the Edo *kaichō* at Asakusa from 1802. The contents and division of the booths is identical even though their spatial layout is slightly altered due to the different location. The various vending stalls expected intense business during the *kaichō*. In 1802, Zenkōji prepared the following items: 20,000 prints of the Amida triad; 20,000 prints of the seal; 3,000 medium-sized prints; 200 large prints; 2,000 prints of Shakamuni; 1,000 prints of Shōtoku Taishi; 5,000 menstruation amulets; 5,000 copies of the abridged *engi*; 2,000 sheets of votive-light registers; 1,000 sheets of seal registers, various printing blocks; and 3,000 flints.⁶⁴⁾

The map from 1777 does not indicate the location of the central object of the *kaichō*, the Amida triad, but the accompanying letter states that the image was displayed in the main hall at the center of the compound. This would of course indicate the importance of the triad in comparison to the other objects that are found to the side. In front of the main hall, in a small structure labeled “seal window” or “seal counter”, amulets were sold. The location of the three founders is not mentioned in the map, but it is likely that they also were displayed in the main hall just as they were at the Shinano Zenkōji. This is supported by a separate document pertaining to the 1778 *kaichō*, which states that the seal and the statues of the three founders were displayed in the main hall of Ekōin to the left and right of the alcove containing the main image.⁶⁵⁾

The layout indicates the importance of the images by (1) their proximity to the main image and (2) whether or not they have their own booth or have to share it with other objects. The Amida triad was the ritual center of the *kaichō*. Near it we find the Three Founders and the Zenkōji seal. The statue of Shakamuni has its own booth whereas the *engi*, the prints and Shōtoku Taishi share their booths with several other items confirming their commercial value. Practical reasons may also have played a role in designing the layout. If the *kaichō* attracted a large crowd, most of whom would try to approach the Zenkōji icon, it would make sense to construct the booths selling amulet and displaying smaller items at a distance in order to prevent overcrowding and encourage donations. Yet it is also important to notice that the layout duplicated the spatial layout of the items at the Shinano Zenkōji, despite obvious adjustments to the architectural conditions of the host site. At Zenkōji the main image would have shared the main hall with the three founders, a statue of the reclining Shakamuni would be housed in a related subtemple close-by, and the various smaller items on display would have shared a space in the respective treasuries of Daihongan and Daikanjin. The layout, therefore, allowed the visitor to do more than simply view the images. Visitors traveled through a spatial reenactment of the Shinano Zenkōji. The most distinctive feature of Zenkōji, the underground passage under the main altar, was of course absent. However, since the passage served as a way to establish a karmic link with the main image of worship during periods when the Zenkōji icon was not on display, it was not completely essential during a *kaichō* when the icon was visible to visitors.

***Kaichō* in the Context of Zenkōji's Institutional History**

Then what was it that led Zenkōji to abandon displaying its icon on tours of the

entire country and in Edo? There is no evidence that this decision was based on unwelcome competition from the sideshows. If anything, the sideshows probably helped to bring more people to Zenkōji's *kaichō* at Ekōin. Rather than external issues, the reasons seem to be more internal to Zenkōji as an institution. As mentioned above, the decision to hold a *kaichō* relied on the consensus of all the parties involved in the maintenance of the Zenkōji cult. Therefore, it provided an opportunity to reconfirm the temple's relationship with its neighboring domain. A *kaichō* also could function to cement head-branch temple or lineage relations if held at temples of the same branch of a sect. One only needs to recall the active involvement of the Sanada house, Kan'eiji and the Aoyama Zenkōji in Zenkōji's *kaichō* in Edo. Last but not least, a *kaichō* was a formidable opportunity to spread and demonstrate the popularity of the cult through elaborate processions into Edo.⁶⁶⁾ In the early 1700s, Zenkōji had still been in the process of institutional reorganization, but by the 1800s, relationships between Zenkōji's subtemples had become routinized. A *degaichō* became primarily not an opportunity to affirm ties but an issue of contention. Consensus was increasingly difficult to obtain. This led to disputes between the temple and the villagers, whose businesses suffered during the absence of the popular icon.

Furthermore, the displays were meant to raise money to fund construction projects. The initial request to the magistrate of temples and shrines usually contained a reference to previous *kaichō* and a list of places to accommodate the travelling party, as well as a description of the reasons for the fund-raiser.⁶⁷⁾ A survey of the typical reasons given for the 1,164 *kaichō* recorded in the bakufu's *Kaichō sashiyurushi chō* yields three cases of aid for the temple estate, sixty-eight cases for religious ceremonies, eighty-three unidentified cases, and 1,010 cases (nearly 87%) claiming temple repairs as a reason. Of course, the requests were partially of a formulaic nature, and it may be that the real reason was the need for extra income.⁶⁸⁾

An examination of the institutional and economic context of Zenkōji's *degaichō* illustrates that Zenkōji's *degaichō* during the Edo period were meant to generate income for much needed reconstruction projects in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Zenkōji's *degaichō* were held to finance the construction of temple buildings frequently destroyed by fires. In 1600, the main hall was rebuilt with the support of Toyotomi Hideyori, but the same hall was destroyed by a fire in 1615. A temporary hall was erected, which was also destroyed by a fire in 1642. By 1650, another temporary hall had been built. Zenkōji planned to erect a permanent hall and received the bakufu's permission to raise funds in Shinano. The new main hall was completed in 1666. Unfortunately, it was badly constructed so that by the Genroku period (1688-1703) the main hall had to be rebuilt. In the fourth month of 1692, Zenkōji received shogunal permission to hold its first *degaichō* at Ekōin to raise the funds for the project. The event was such a success that it was extended from fifty-five days to sixty days. Finally, however, it was terminated. The place was so crowded with pilgrims that it had become life threatening, a situation eloquently described in Toda Mosui's *Nashi no moto sho* 梨本書 (1694).

[Master Mo, Master Sui, and Mozaemon] arrived at the gate of Muenji. A crowd of men sat lined up tightly on the gate and the walls to the side. They had

probably climbed up there to take a look because there were so many people crowded inside that one could not see anything. [...] The place was so crowded that it was impossible to get near Amida. [...] The main image of worship was in a booth to the north. To the left, likenesses of Yoshimitsu and his wife were on display. Yet there were large crowds of people so it was impossible to advance beyond the Niōmon. People were ringing a large bell and saying the *nenbutsu*. It was so noisy that it was impossible to make out anything. Saying: “Stop! Stop! The next group please! The next group please!” people were rushing into the place where sermons were given, making it so crowded that one seem to be about to be pushed over in the onslaught.⁶⁹⁾

Visitors came not only to view the Amida triad but also to see other treasures, listen to sermons, and obtain imprints of the Zenkōji seal:

Well, across from the Lotus Pond by the shrine of Benzaiten, there was the greatest treasure, King Emma’s Golden Seal. It cost one gold *bu* to have it administered. If one has this seal, one passes through the gates of the Pure Land without any question. Therefore, even very sinful people are able to approach the Buddha. The Buddha will say to them: “Ah, you have done well to come here. If a worthless fellow like you turns into a profound person, when you go before King Emma you will encounter much blame, but because you have received the Golden Seal, they will let you pass the gate and come to me up here.” People say that it is wonderful that one will go to paradise by means of a ticket. It is convenient that one can go to paradise for the price of one gold *bu*.⁷⁰⁾

Toda’s account clearly highlights the connection between salvation and the purchase of Zenkōji’s seal and donations for rebuilding the temple.

There was a wicket between two posts on the other side [of the bridge] that opened just a small crack. To pass through the wicket cost 12 *mon* per person [...]. Looking to the right, there was a long row of booths facing south. On the counter there was an ink stone and a register in which everyone signed up continuously. This was the office of the register of donations for the main hall. A pillar before the Buddha was 127 *ryō* each, a ridgepole was several *ryō*, a crossbeam was some *ryō*. The prices were detailed down to boards, nails, and tiles. After recording the donation of one’s choice in the register, one could view Amida. Amida says: “It is best to donate as a large an amount as possible and put it down in the register. This is not for me, the *nyorai*, but when you face Emma and your sins are weighed on a large scale, your donation serves as a counterweight to make you lighter and you can go up to paradise. Heed these words!”⁷¹⁾

Toda Mosui’s attitude toward the concept of buying one’s salvation may be tinged with irony, but the idea that amulets and donations could ensure one’s rebirth in the Amida’s Pure Land did not originate in the Edo period. In 1274, Ippen (1239-1289), the founder of the Ji school, began distributing *nenbutsu* amulets because he believed

that mere acceptance of the amulet would ensure people rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. The distribution of such amulets remained an important aspect of the Ji school into the Edo period. In the fourteenth century, the Bukkōji branch of the Jōdo Shin school kept registers of obedient and generous followers whose salvation was guaranteed by their inclusion in the list.⁷²⁾ The reasoning behind the sale of Zenkōji amulets imprinted with the Zenkōji seal were clearly related to such traditional practices. In fact, the Ji school was one of three Buddhist schools represented at Zenkōji until the early eighteenth century along with the Tendai and Jōdo schools.

Financially, the 1692 *degaichō* was a great success. After the display at Ekōin had concluded, the Zenkōji Amida triad was moved to Edo castle upon the wish of Shōgun Tsunayoshi's mother Keishōin, who donated 100 *ryō*. Two years later the image was displayed at Shinyōdō in Kyoto and Shitennōji in Osaka where it was equally crowded. The *degaichō* in the three cities yielded about 13,000 *ryō*.⁷³⁾

Zenkōji used this money to rebuild the main hall. The site of the compound was moved further north and away from the town because the previous proximity had proved to be disastrous in cases of fire. In 1697, the construction work began, but ironically only three years later, a fire broke out in the town and destroyed not only several temple buildings and the main hall under construction as well as the wood supply that had been acquired for the construction project.⁷⁴⁾

Zenkōji had to begin complete reconstruction work for the second time in one decade. This time the shogunate intervened. The *bakufu* entrusted the neighboring Matsushiro domain with the supervision of the reconstruction work and appointed Keiun, who was the nephew of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, one of the shogun's councilors, as the new abbot of Daikanjin. At the time Keiun was already the abbot of two temples in Edo: Daihofukuji and Kannōji. Under Keiun's strict and capable guidance another *degaichō* campaign was carried out between 1701-1706. This time the temple decided to hold a *kaikoku kaichō*, that is, the image was to be displayed throughout the country.

Keiun first tried to salvage the remaining funds from the previous *degaichō*. Then in 1701 the image went on a grand procession throughout the country. The funds collected on the tour were carefully monitored and directly forwarded to the Matsushiro domain office. Just as the previous *degaichō* in the early 1690s, the tour was a great financial success amounting to over 23,000 *ryō*. While the tour continued, construction work began in Shinano. With the help of the *bakufu* official Kōra Sōga, the plans from 1694 for the new main hall were revised in 1703. After preparations had been completed, construction work began in the tenth month of 1705. The main hall was completed on the twelfth day of the tenth month of 1707 and was the largest wooden structure after Tōdaiji (which was also being reconstructed around the same time). The construction costs of Zenkōji's main hall amounted to 24,577 *ryō*. After erecting a monument in the back of the hall in 1713, Keiun returned to Edo in 1714, his task in Shinano having been successfully completed.⁷⁵⁾

One factor that made Zenkōji's *degaichō* less profitable was that the *kaichō* processions, intended initially to advertise the cult, in fact grew in scale over the course of the period. By the early 1800s, they ultimately had become counterproductive, financially unprofitable affairs. Moreover, Zenkōji was spared from disasters for a

period of about one hundred and fifty years, so the pressure for large fundraising projects abated. Zenkōji's administrator at Daikanjin did not have to spend large amounts of its income on reconstruction projects but could focus on the repair and expansion of the existing complex. From 1740-1748 the image traveled again to the three major cities of Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka as well as the rest of the country. During the *kaichō* the main hall was repaired in 1745. Right after the *kaichō* the mountain gate was constructed in 1750. This project was followed by the construction of a *sūtra* repository in 1755. From 1778-1782 another *degaichō* was carried out on a similar scale but was suspended due to the illness of the Daikanjin abbot. The *degaichō* was continued from 1794-1798 when a when the temple organized a tour through the regions on the Japan Sea and central Japan as well as Shikoku and Kyushu. In the meantime construction work was carried out on the main hall, the mountain gate, the *sūtra* repository, and the outer gate from 1791-1792. When Zenkōji did not receive permission to construct a five-storied pagoda, the funds were used to rebuild Daikanjin's grounds. In 1803 and 1820, *degaichō* in Edo took place but the image no longer went on a tour of Japan. As mentioned above, plans for another *degaichō* were aborted in 1835 upon the protest of the temple town and the subtemples. The motivations for these *kaichō* are not completely clear. Construction work is not reported until 1840, when the temple's roof was repaired.⁷⁶⁾ In 1847, a 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck Zenkōji and its temple town. As the temple struggled to recover, another *degaichō* seemed unthinkable.

While *degaichō* became less profitable and an increasing source of internal conflict as the period progressed, *igaichō* held at the Shinano Zenkōji provided a steady source of income and caused less friction between the various institutions and the temple town. They proved to be more profitable for Daikanjin and the rest of Zenkōji's temple town since it led to an increase of pilgrims. Occasionally, it was in fact the town that would petition Zenkōji to hold an *igaichō* during times of economic difficulty. When disagreements occurred, they were not about whether or not to hold an *igaichō* but about who was permitted to handle the visitors and sales of amulets.

An *igaichō* at Zenkōji was called *goekō* and became a regular event in the Edo period since 1730. The first full-scale *igaichō* lasting about one and a half months was carried out in 1742 to mark the end of a two-year long *kaikoku kaichō*. Subsequently, *igaichō* held fifteen times during the following 125 years until the end of the Bakumatsu period. The event often took place immediately after the completion of a *degaichō* – perhaps to revitalize the local economy – or during periodic continuous nenbutsu celebrations. The festivities usually lasted from the tenth of the third month to the end of the fourth month. The exact amount of income generated by the event is difficult to gauge because the independent income of the subtemples and merchants within the compound, the town's merchants, and inns was left unrecorded. The average income from the ceremony for the temple complex alone was about 5000 *kanme*. Daikanjin retained about half of the income for itself; the rest was distributed among the various subtemples at Zenkōji who each received about 50 *kanme*.⁷⁸⁾ Eventually, Zenkōji opted to abandon the practice of the more troublesome *degaichō* and concentrated on holding *igaichō*.

Conclusion

Throughout the Edo period, Zenkōji's *kaichō* were motivated by economic considerations, but soteriological principles continued to play an important role in the way the *kaichō* were conceived. Economic motivations were not necessarily a deterrent from the religious function of the *kaichō*, but one might say that the two went hand in hand. Nevertheless, Zenkōji's *degaichō* eventually became less profitable. This was one of the main reasons why the institution first ceased to hold *kaikoku kaichō* and finally even Edo *kaichō*. Zenkōji not only faced competition from ever grander sideshows but also from the increasing number of *degaichō* held by other temples. These included – as Kobayashi Keiichirō has noted – a growing number of Shin Zenkōji (such as the Takadasan Senjuji), which were especially close competitors.⁷⁹⁾ Zenkōji responded by holding ever grander and ever more costly *degaichō*. Zenkōji also faced internal tension and resistance from its temple town, which objected to the practice because it led to a decrease in pilgrims to Zenkōji that reduced potential income for the businesses in town. A combination of these factors ultimately led Zenkōji to abandon *degaichō* in favor of *igaichō*.

A testament to the great popularity of Zenkōji's *kaichō*, these *igaichō* have continued into the modern period. With the modern improvements in transportation, the display of the Zenkōji icon easily can attract large numbers of visitors to Nagano City without having to move the image to a major urban center. After Zenkōji was partially destroyed in an earthquake in 1847 and a fire in 1852 and then lost parts of its temple estate in the aftermath of the Meiji restoration, the temple recovered only when a railroad line between Nagano City and Tokyo was opened in 1893. The access restored the popularity of the Zenkōji cult.⁸⁰⁾ Since the Meiji period, Zenkōji has held *igaichō* every five to six years in April and May.⁸¹⁾ In fact, on the first day of the 1997 *igaichō* Zenkōji drew 65,000 pilgrims, who came to touch a pillar that is connected by a string to the right hand of the *maedachi honzon*, because making physical contact with the pillar has the same efficacy as touching the image itself. The temple had 5.2 million visitors during the *igaichō* in 1997 and projected six million visitors in 2003, a more than tenfold increase from immediate postwar levels. The recent increase in pilgrims is partially attributable to the construction of the Jōetsu Highway up to Nagano City in 1996 and the opening of the Jōetsu Shinkansen in October 1997 in connection with the 1998 Winter Olympics held in northern Nagano Prefecture. The Zenkōji *kaichō*, which no longer features the extravagant sideshows of the late Edo period, continues to be a popular attraction to this day.

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Notes

- 1) “Miyako no teburī” *Kindai Nihon bungaku taikei* 23, *kyōbun haibun shū*, 968.
- 2) Nagano-ken-shi, *tsūshi hen*, kinsei 2 316; Hiruma “Kaichō,” 53.
- 3) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 200.
- 4) Tamamuro, 508-9, Kitamura “Kaichō,” 75-6.
- 5) Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 276-7.
- 6) Kitamura *Kinsei kaichō no kenkyū*, 3, 7; Tamamuro, 508-9, Kitamura “Kaichō,” 75-6.
- 7) Kitamura *Kinsei kaichō no kenkyū*, 242, 248-251; Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 278-9.
- 8) Kitamura *Kinsei kaichō no kenkyū*, 10-13.
- 9) Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō*, 575-6.
- 10) Tamamuro, 508-9.
- 11) Markus “The Carnival of Edo: Misemono Spectacles from Contemporary Accounts,” 505-10, 519-32.
- 12) “Kōriki Enkōan,” *Aichi hyakka jiten*, 315.
- 13) “Tamamuro *Nihonmeisetsu daijiten*, 164, 488; *Amida nyorai ekotoba den*, Vol. 6, 40-1.
- 14) “Takadasan kaichōmairi annai,” *Nagoya sōsho 14: fūzoku geinōhen*, Vol. 2, 300-10. For more detail on Kōriki Enkōan’s description of *kaichō* in Owari Province see Kitamura Gyōen, “Kinsei Owari ni okeru kaichō ‘Enkōan nikki’ o chushin ni.”
- 15) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 11-22.
- 16) Tamamuro, *Meisetsu daijiten*, 49; Asai, *Edo meisho ki*, 126-33.
- 17) Harada, *Edo meisho zue*, 1852-61.
- 18) Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 278, 389-98. Kitamura has questioned whether Hiruma’s choice to limit his data to those overlapping in both the *Bukō nenpyō* and the bakufu records because one is a private record and the other an official record written for different purposes based on different sources and different reasons for including or excluding certain *kaichō*. However, in his own evaluation of the data in the same sources, he comes to similar conclusions, e.g. regarding the temporal distribution of Edo-period *kaichō*. See Kitamura Gyōen, *Kinsei kaichō no kenkyū*, 3-4, 17-22.
- 19) Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 366-88 and Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 45-8. Figures 1.1-2.2 are based on Hiruma’s data.
- 20) Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 366-88, and Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 45-8.
- 21) Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 366-88, and Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 45-8.
- 22) Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 366-86, 436, and Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 45-8. Figure 3 is based on Hiruma’s data.
- 23) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 38-9. For an in-depth study of Nichiren-sect *kaichō*, see Kitamura, *Kinsei kaichō no kenkyū*, 34-228.
- 24) *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 324.
- 25) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō* 181-3.
- 26) Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō* 589-91; *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 318.
- 27) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 181-3.
- 28) *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 316; Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edo chōnin no kenkyū*, 380.
- 29) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 181-3.
- 30) Kobayashi, *Waga machi no rekishi: Nagano*, 102-7; *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 312, 322-3; Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 92-3.
- 31) Hiruma, “Edo no kaichō,” *Edochōnin no kenkyū*, 366-88, and Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 45-8.
- 32) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 181-3.
- 33) Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 92-3.
- 34) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 183-7.
- 35) Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji no Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 94.
- 36) *Kōka yonen Zenkōji daijishin*, 76; Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō*, 577-8.
- 37) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō* 181-3.
- 38) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō* 188.
- 39) Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji no Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 95; Kobayashi Keiichirō, “An’ei nananen Edo kaichō no shōsai keigasho,” 13-17.
- 40) *Nagano kenshi, kinsei shiryōhen*, Vol. 7, Part 3, 701, 723, 731-2, 738-9, 744.

- 41) *Nagano kenshi, kinsei shiryōhen*, Vol. 3, 713-4.
- 42) Kobayashi, “Zenkōji kaichō”, 4; Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji no Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 84.
- 43) *Zusetsu: Naganoken no rekishi*, Vol. 8; Kobayashi, “Zenkōji Daihongan to bakufu daioku, Kasuga Tsubone,” 6-7.
- 44) *Bukō nenpyō*, Vol. 1, 96.
- 45) For a more detailed summary see McCallum, *Zenkōji and Its Icon* 46-9. For this paper I have relied primarily on the Zenkōji engi from 1668 but also consulted the version of the Zenkōji engi printed in *Shinhen Shinano shiryō sōsho*, 1, 99-148.
- 46) There are several extant triptychs and quadrupartite panels depicting the *Zenkōji engi*, some of which date back to the medieval period. Such paintings are found, for example, at Myōgenji (Aichi Prefecture), Honshōji (Aichi Prefecture), Manseiji (Aichi Prefecture), Daihongan (Nagano Prefecture) and Daikanjin (Nagano Prefecture). The engi that went on this *kaichō* might have resembled these paintings. See *Shaji engi e*, 202; *Edo jidai zushi*, 10: *Nakasendō*, Vol. 1, 98-9; Ishikura, *Zenkōji meissho zue ix*; *Nagano kenshi, bijutsu kenchiku shiryō hen*, Vol. 1, 52-3; *Nagano kenshi, bijutsu kenchiku shiryō hen*, Vol. 2, 68.
- 47) Nishiyama, “Jotei” no dagokuji: Zenkōji sankei mandara tekusuto ni shite,” 21, 38-9. In her article “Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature,” Barbara Ruch gives a concise explanation of *etoki*:

The performance of emaki [picture scrolls] emerged during the twelfth century in major shrines and temples through an activity known as *etoki*, or “picture explanations,” performed by *etoki hōshi* or “picture explaining priests,” who were sometimes also called simply *etoki*, “picture explainers.” *Engi emaki* (illustrated histories of shrines and temples and of the origins of the deities worshiped there) and *kōsōden emaki* (illustrated biographical works depicting events in the lives of important priests and founders of sects) were displayed in temples on certain occasions and an *etoki hōshi* would give an *etoki* performance by providing a narrative for the viewers. (Ruch, “Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature,” 295)

She divides the performers of *etoki* into three types: *etoki hōshi* performing at temples for a fee, secular *etoki* working by the roadside, and *etoki* acting as “salesmen of the faith.” She writes:

In addition to the temple *etoki* performer of religious murals and scrolls and the secular *etoki* performer by the roadside or at the mansions of the wealthy, there was a third type, the “salesman of the faith.” In the face of financial crises in the temples and as a result of a rising pitch of evangelical fervor, particularly among the Amidist sects, these *etoki hōshi* traveled to the countryside with their *kakejiku* (illustrative hanging scrolls) and emaki to proselytize and to raise funds for their home institutions. (Ruch, “Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature” 299)
- 48) *Nagano kenshi, bijutsu kenchiku shiryō hen*, Vol. 1, 310-1; *Nagano kenshi, bijutsu kenchiku shiryō hen*, Vol. 2, 574.
- 49) *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 318; Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō*, 578-81, 586.
- 50) Kobayashi Keiichirō, “An’ei nananen Edo kaichō no shōsai keigasho,” 15-17.
- 51) Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji no Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 95.
- 52) Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji no Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 102-3.
- 53) The *katsuji* text in *Nagano kenshi, kinsei shiryōhen*, Vol. 7, Part 3, 756, actually has 常番 instead of 常香. This must be a mistake.
- 54) *Nagano kenshi, kinsei shiryōhen*, Vol. 7, Part 3, 757-762.
- 55) My translation based on Yaba, *Edo jidai no Shinano kikō shū*, 182.
- 56) My translation based on *Zenkōji shoshi* 105 and Sakai, *Zenkōji shi*, Vol. 2, 859.
- 57) *Nagano kenshi, bijutsu kenchiku shiryō hen*, Vol. 1, 100; *Nagano kenshi, bijutsu kenchiku shiryō hen*, Vol. 2, 198; Kobayashi, “An’ei nananen Edo kaichō no shōsai keigasho,” 14.
- 58) Katō *Zenkōji bettō Daikanjin shashin chō*
- 59) *Nagano kenshi, bijutsu kenchiku shiryō hen*, Vol. 1, 52-3.
- 60) *Nagano kenshi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 320-22; McCallum, *Zenkōji and Its Icon*, 46.
- 61) *Nagano kenshi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 320-22; McCallum, *Zenkōji and Its Icon*, 46.
- 62) *Nagano kenshi, kinsei shiryōhen*, Vol. 7, Part 3, 737-8; 744-5.

- 63) Two other letters like this survive, one from a Kyoto *kaichō* in 1740 (lacking a map) and one from 1802 from an Edo *kaichō* at Asakusa. These documents merely confirm the layout from 1777. *Nagano kenshi, kinsei shiryōhen*, Vol. 7, Part 3, 732, 737-8, 744-5.
- 64) Takatsukasa, “Zenkōji no Edo kaichō ni tsuite,” 108-10.
- 65) Kobayashi, “An’ei nananen Edo kaichō no shōsai keigasho,” 16.
- 66) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 38-9.
- 67) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 182.
- 68) Hiruma, *Edo no kaichō*, 36-8.
- 69) “Nashi no moto sho,” *Toda Mosui zenshū*, 202.
- 70) “Nashi no moto sho,” *Toda Mosui zenshū*, 202.
- 71) “Nashi no moto sho,” *Toda Mosui zenshū*, 202.
- 72) Kasahara, *A History of Japanese Religion*, 201-2, 204-5.
- 73) *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 311, 316.
- 74) *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 311-12.
- 75) *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 312-4; McCallum, *Zenkōji and Its Icon*, 171-3.
- 76) Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō*, 575-6; *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 314-16.
- 77) Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō*, 575-6, 589-91, *Nagano-ken-shi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 318.
- 78) *Nagano kenshi, tsūshi hen, kinsei*, Vol. 2, 318; Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō*, 578-81, 586.
- 79) Kobayashi, “Zenkōji kaichō,” 4.
- 80) Kobayashi, *Naganoshi shikō*, 548, 552; Kobayashi, *Waga machi no rekishi, Nagano* (Appendix) 6; McCallum, *Zenkōji and Its Icon*, 177-8; *Nakasendō 1, Edo jidai zushi*, Vol. 10, 96-7.
- 81) Kobayashi, “Zenkōji kaichō,” 7-12.
- 82) “Rokunen ni ichido kansetsu tacchi ware saki ni: Zenkōji maedachi hanzon,” 1; “Zenkōji temple shows replica of Buddhist Statue.”; <http://w1.avis.ne.jp/~waka>